

CLAIMS:

1. A method for controlling a non-player character in a computer game,
the method comprising:

providing a squad of user-commandable characters, the squad including a
5 player character and at least one non-player character, the non-player character being
commandable via the player character;

detecting a predefined game event;

adjusting a current emotional state of the non-player character based on the
game event; and

10 selecting a non-player character reaction based on the current emotional
state of the non-player character.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein movement of the player character is
controlled by direct user input from a user input device, and movement of the non-player
15 character is controlled by the computer game program.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the emotional state is a fear state.

4. The method of claim 3, the method further comprising, adjusting the
20 fear state of the non-player character based on the non-player character's proximity to a
fear emitter.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein detecting the predefined game event includes detecting that the non-player character has come within a predefined distance of a fear emitter, and wherein adjusting the fear state includes increasing the fear state if the player is within the predefined distance.

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6. The method of claim 4, wherein detecting the predefined game event includes detecting that the NPC has moved beyond a predefined distance from the fear emitter, and wherein adjusting the fear state includes decreasing the fear state if the player is beyond the predefined distance.

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7. The method of claim 3, further comprising, adjusting the fear state of the non-player character based on the non-player character's proximity to other squad members.

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8. The method of claim 7, wherein the game event is the non-player character being left alone by the player-character for greater than a predetermined period of time, and wherein adjusting the emotional state includes increasing the fear state of the non-player character.

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9. The method of claim 7, wherein the game event is the non-player character being in the presence of other non-player character squad members, and where adjusting the emotional state includes reducing the fear state of the non-player character.

10. The method of claim 3, further comprising, adjusting the fear state of the non-player character based on the non-player character's possession of weapons or ammunition.

5 11. The method of claim 10, wherein the game event is the player character giving a weapon or ammunition to the non-player character, and wherein adjusting the emotional state includes decreasing the fear state of the non-player character.

10 12. The method of claim 10, wherein the game event is the player character taking a weapon or ammunition from the non-player character, and wherein adjusting the emotional state includes increasing the fear state of the non-player character.

15 13. The method of claim 3, further comprising, adjusting the fear state of the non-player character based on medicine received by the non-player character.

14. The method of claim 4, further comprising, displaying the fear state of the non-player character via a fear indicator on a GUI of the computer game.

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15. The method of claim 4, further comprising, inhibiting the non-player character from responding to a command from the player character, when the fear state is above a predetermined level.

5 16. The method of claim 1, wherein the non-player character reaction includes a self-destructive act.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the non-player character reaction includes an act of incapacitation.

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18. The method of claim 3, wherein the emotional state further includes a trust state, the method further comprising causing the non-player character to become immune to fear-influencing events upon reaching a predetermined trust state.

15 19. The method of claim 3, wherein the non-player character reaction includes attacking an enemy when the fear state is at or below a threshold fear state.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein the emotional state is a trust state.

20 21. The method of claim 20, wherein detecting the predefined game event includes detecting the occurrence of a trust-influencing event.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein the trust-influencing event is a trust-down event, configured to lower a current trust state of the non-player character.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the trust-down event includes a
5 player character taking away weapon from a non-player character.

24. The method of claim 22, wherein the trust-down event includes a player character taking away ammunition from a non-player character.

10 25. The method of claim 22, wherein trust-down event includes a player character attacking a non-player character.

26. The method of claim 22, wherein trust-down event includes player character leaving a non-player character alone.

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27. The method of claim 21, wherein the trust-influencing event includes a trust-up event.

28. The method of claim 27, wherein the trust-up event includes a player
20 character giving a non-player character a weapon.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the trust state of the non-player character is raised if the weapon is better than a weapon formerly possessed by the non-player character, and is lowered if the weapon is worse than formerly possessed by the non-player character.

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30. The method of claim 27, wherein trust-up event includes a player character healing the non-player character.

31. The method of claim 27, wherein trust-up event includes a player
10 character subjecting itself to a medical examination, in a vicinity of a non-player character.

32. The method of claim 27, wherein trust-up event includes a player character attacking a monster in a vicinity of non-player character.

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33. The method of claim 20, wherein the non-player character reaction includes being unable to perform a command from the player character when the trust state of the non-player character is below a predetermined level.

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34. The method of claim 20, wherein the emotional state further includes a fear state, and wherein the non-player character reaction includes becoming unaffected by trust-influencing events upon reaching a threshold fear state.

35. The method of claim 20, wherein the non-player character reaction includes attacking an enemy when the trust state is at a threshold trust state.

36. A computer game system for emotion-based character interaction,
5 the system comprising, a computer game program having:

a module configured to control movement for a squad of user-commandable characters, the squad including a player character and at least one non-player character, the non-player character being commandable via the player character;
and

10 a non-player character module including:

a game event detector configured to detect a predefined game event;

an emotional state adjustor configured to adjust a current emotional state of the non-player character based on the game event; and

a non-player character reaction selector configured to select a non-
15 player character reaction based on a current emotional state of the non-player character.

37. Computer readable media having instructions stored thereon, which when executed by a computing device, cause the computing device to perform a method comprising the steps of:

5 providing a squad of user-commandable characters, the squad including a player character and at least one non-player character, the non-player character being commandable via the player character;

detecting a predefined game event;

adjusting a current emotional state of the non-player character based on the game event; and

10 selecting a non-player character reaction based on the current emotional state of the non-player character.